

THREE PARKS INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATS

Cathedral Station ♦ P.O. Box 1316 ♦ New York, N.Y. 10025 ♦ (212) 866-6378

Website: ThreeParksDems.org ♦ Email: ThreeParksDems@aol.com

President

Daniele Gerard

Editor

Ray Schwartz (tapsch@nyc.rr.com)

District Leaders

Bob Botfeld
Cynthia Doty

State Committee

Lynn Thomas

January 2009

JANUARY MEETING: **Wednesday, January 14, 2009**

FEATURED TOPIC **The Obama Administration & Organized Labor:**
Public Works & Green Jobs – Ed Ott, NYC Central
& Labor Council
SPEAKERS **Albany Update 2009:** State Senator Eric Schneiderman
& Assemblymember Daniel O'Donnell

TIME: 8:00 PM

PLACE: American Youth Hostels
891 Amsterdam Avenue at 103rd Street

ROOM: Chapel

AGENDA

7:45 PM Sign-in

8 PM Call to Order

1. President's Report & Announcements
2. District Leaders' Reports
3. Ed Ott: The Obama Administration & Organized Labor
4. State Senator Eric Schneiderman
5. Assemblymember Daniel O'Donnell
6. Vote on Term Limits Resolution
7. New Business
8. Adjournment

CALENDAR

Wed., January 28, 2009, 8 PM

Three Parks Board Meeting

Place: Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Ave. at 103rd St

Wed., February 11, 2009, 8 PM

Three Parks Meeting

Place: Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Ave at 103rd St.

Wed., February 25, 2009, 8 PM

Three Parks Board Meeting

Place: Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Ave at 103rd St

Wed., March 11, 2009, 8 PM

Three Parks Meeting

Place: Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Ave. at 103rd St.

President's Column

By Daniele Gerard

What an amazing turnout for the annual Three Parks Holiday Party! More than 400 hardworking storefront volunteers, members, electeds and friends of the Club joined together to celebrate this festive time of year. And there certainly is much to celebrate with the incoming Obama Administration! Thanks to all who participated, and especially to our State Committeewoman Lynn Thomas for the fabulous decorations and organization and to longtime Board member Ernestine Gallagher for an excellent meal presentation and feeding of the masses. Because of the support from our community at the party, the Club collected and donated over 250 lbs. of canned goods to the West Side Campaign Against Hunger.

The upcoming Three Parks meeting on January 14th will feature Ed Ott, Executive Director of the New York City Central Labor Council, who will discuss organized labor, public works and green jobs under the Obama Administration. We will also hear an update on Albany from our State Senator Eric Schneiderman and our Assemblymember Daniel O'Donnell. Following the speakers' remarks, there will be an opportunity for Q&A, so be sure not to miss what promises to be a timely and informative event.

Three Parks will hold its Mayoral Forum at the February 11th meeting. So far, Councilmember Tony Avella and Congressman Anthony Weiner have confirmed their attendance. Comptroller William Thompson has also been invited. This will be the first in a series of candidate forums that the Club will hold in this municipal election year. Come on down to hear the candidates and get all the information you'll need to vote in endorsement meetings. Remember, you must be a member in good standing to be eligible to vote in club elections; if you haven't yet joined Three Parks, renewed your membership or attended a recent meeting (see next column), please do so now!

Also at the February meeting, members will be able to vote for nominees to the Three Parks Board of Directors. The list of nominees and voter eligibility requirements appear later in the next column.

On behalf of the Three Parks Board of Directors, I wish you the very best for a happy and a healthy New Year!

Proposed Nominees to the Three Parks Board of Directors

Theresa Canter, Second Vice President
Jock Davenport
Ellen Flax, Treasurer
Arlene Geiger
Ernestine Gallagher
Daniele Gerard, President
Elizabeth Kellner
David Kogelman
Marie Lunn
Bruce Markens
Mary Ann Marks
Lynn Max, Membership Secretary
Merle Mceldowney
Corine Pettey
Milivoy Samurovich
Ray Schwartz, Corresponding Secretary
Deborah Thomas
Ken Tulloch
Yvonne Vulliemoz
Tim Walsh
Lauren Williams, Recording Secretary
Judy Wood, First Vice President

The District Leaders, Bob Botfeld and Cynthia Doty, are *ex officio* members of the Board.

As the Three Parks Constitution provides, to be eligible to vote, a member new to the Club during the calendar year of such vote must have attended at least one other meeting of the Club within the previous six months. Members of Three Parks in the prior calendar year must have attended at least one Club meeting within the previous six months and have their dues current by the vote. Any person residing in the 69th Assembly District or any adjoining Assembly District, or anyone employed in or doing business in the 69th Assembly District, who is a registered voter enrolled in the Democratic Party shall become a member in good standing thirty days after application for membership and the payment of dues.

Condolences to Curtis Arluck and his family on the death of his father, Arthur Arluck.

For-profit Insurance Has No Role in Health Care

By Steve Max

The coming year will see a debate over four very different philosophies regarding the American health care system. They are: (1) Private for-profit health insurance should be abolished and replaced by a universal public (like Medicare) plan such as exists in much of the rest of the world; (2) Private for-profit insurance should be subsidized to make it profitable for companies to cover 42 million Americans who are now uninsured; (3) Give everyone \$3,000 to buy insurance; and (4) There is no problem, we already have the best health care in the world.

Legislative proposals coming from Democrats are combinations of these, based mainly on private insurance with a public component. They will be reviewed in the future. This article makes the case for eliminating private for-profit health insurance and replacing it with a public program. Public doesn't mean that doctors become public employees as in England. It means that a single public agency collects all the premiums and pays all the health care providers without going through insurance companies.

The overall performance of the US health care system was ranked 37th in the world by the World Health Organization (WHO). We are 46th in life expectancy and 41st in infant mortality, yet our system is twice as expensive as the average of the other industrial nations. In fact, America spends twice as much on health care as on food.

A major reason we pay so much more for so much less is that no other industrial country relies as heavily on private for-profit insurance as does the US. Thirty-five percent of our health care expenditures come through private insurance companies, compared to only thirteen percent in France and four percent in Italy, the countries whose health care systems were rated first and second by the WHO. In most other industrial countries, everyone participates in the public plan; private insurance is for extras and uncovered items. In the US, seniors, poor people and veterans are in public plans, but most working people who have health insurance get it through private companies.

So what? The critical point here is that insurance is based on the principle of shared risk. The need for health care, however, isn't a risk—in today's

world, it's a certainty. Insurance, or shared risk, only works if the vast majority of people who pay into it never need it. Auto theft insurance works because the vast majority of cars are not, in fact, stolen. But, if you live in a neighborhood where more cars are stolen, you either can't get insurance or it is so expensive that you can't afford it. Homeowners' insurance works because most homes are not destroyed by flood. But if you live within fifty miles of the coast, you are put in a state-sponsored insurance pool. Insurance companies are still refusing to pay for Katrina damage, maintaining this was a flood and they only cover hurricanes. Insurance only works when most people don't need it.

The use of health care is a certainty at every stage of our lives. It isn't a risk. We would never dream of taking out school insurance on our kids in case something awful happened to them and they needed an education. Health care is like education—it's an ongoing necessity, something we want everyone to have and to use. We need a system that delivers health care at the lowest cost, not one based on the assumption that we won't use it.

Private insurance costs more. For example, Medicare Advantage is essentially the same program as Medicare. It is paid for by public funds, but privately administered. Republicans hoped to prove that private companies could run Medicare better than the government, but the opposite was true. Administrative costs in Medicare Advantage companies represent 11% of benefits. In Medicare itself, they represent only 2%. In 2006, Advantage companies made a profit of \$3.3 billion. Under Medicare, all of that money would have gone to benefits, but it was squandered on profits because of the right-wing ideology that private corporations are always more efficient than public agencies.

A *New England Journal Of Medicine* article (August 2003) found that administrative costs accounted for 35% of all health care expenditures in the US, but only 16% under Canada's public system. Why the disparity? The example of Duke University Hospital tells a big part of the story. Duke has 900 beds and employs 900 billing clerks whose job it is to get insurance companies to pay their bills. In Canada, private insurance is insignificant and so is the number of billing clerks. The provincial health system gives hospitals a global budget and says cover your costs with this. We don't want to hear from you

every time a patient needs a pill, just give us an accounting at the end of the year.

America can have the world's best health care system or we can have one built on private for-profit insurance companies—but not both. Even if we have to pension off a whole generation of billing clerks, and we probably will, public systems such as those that have proven themselves the world over will give us better care at lower cost.

There will be a health care briefing and discussion led by Steve Max on Thursday, February 5th at 7:30 PM at the Youth Hostel, 103rd St. and Amsterdam Ave. in the Board Room, 2nd Floor. Everyone wishing to be active on this issue is invited.

The Club will hold a Health Care Forum at either the February 11th or March 11th meeting, depending on the scheduling of other speakers. Details to be announced.

Dangerous Neglect: Elevator Safety in New York Housing Authority Buildings

By Manhattan Borough President
Scott M. Stringer

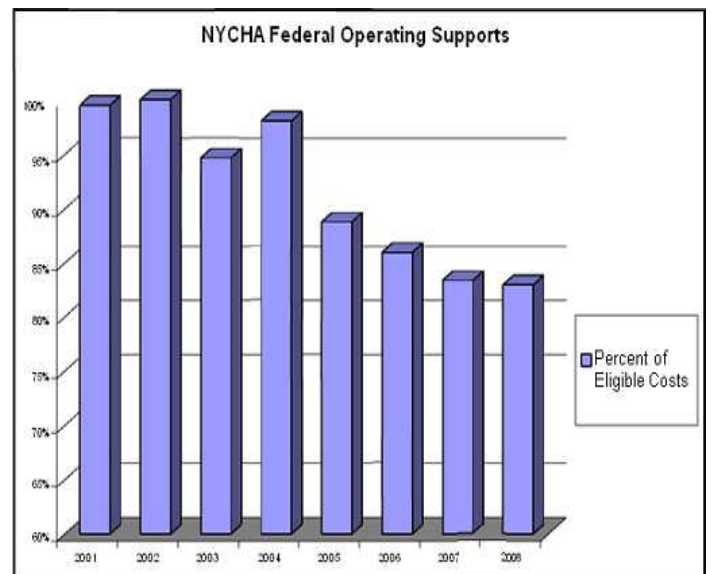
Over 400,000 residents, or five percent of the city's population, live in some 2,700 buildings of the New York City Housing Authority. Residents frequently get stuck in the elevators. The fire department rescued 11,000 city residents last year from elevator mishaps, many of which may well have occurred in some of the 3,000 housing authority elevators.

On August 19, 2008, a five-year-old boy named Jacob Neuman died when he fell down an elevator shaft after the doors of his elevator opened in mid-trip at the Taylor-Wythe Houses in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. A year earlier, 57-year-old Lillian Milán died because, though a severe asthma sufferer, she was forced to walk up the 10 stories to her apartment in Bushwick Houses. She had returned from a doctor's appointment to find both elevators in her building broken, and she had waited hours after calling management to get them fixed. Both elevators were in buildings owned by the New York City Housing Authority ("NYCHA"), the largest landlord in the city.

Since January 1, 2004, the housing authority's own elevator inspectors gave "unsatisfactory" grades in three-quarters (75 percent) of its frequently conducted and wide-ranging inspections of its elevators throughout New York City (the figure for Manhattan was 70%; of the inspections in the CB 7 area, 390 of 517 (75%) were unsatisfactory).

Every passenger elevator built in the past two decades is required by the elevator code established by the American Society of Mechanical Engineers to have a device called a door restrictor--restricting the opening to no more than 4 inches. Because it was built earlier, Jacob Neuman's elevator did not have such a device. Had a door restrictor been installed (the Housing Authority estimates the cost of such installation to be \$3,000), Jacob Neuman would not have died.

Many reasons have been offered for the failure to keep the elevators in good repair. This includes a lack of accountability – the Housing Authority is the only organization in New York that is allowed to use its own staff to do all its elevator inspections. It also includes a lack of funding.



Because of the decrease in federal operating support, there has also been a decrease of eight percent in elevator maintenance staff over the last 5 years.

While some have blamed the broken elevators on tenant vandalism, local residents at a public hearing at the Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. State Office Building in Harlem attribute the

unsatisfactory reports to complaints not being followed up. A Three Parks member and Douglass Houses resident noted that while the grounds around the buildings have been improved, the elevators are "pretty nasty. With a large elderly population, we don't always feel safe. Maintenance has definitely gone downhill in recent years."

A report by the Office of the Manhattan Borough President entitled Dangerous Neglect "documents a culture of neglect beyond what anyone should tolerate," said Stringer.

To improve this drastic situation, the Borough President has proposed:

1. Mandatory door zone restrictors
2. Periodic Department of Buildings inspection of NYCHA elevators, similar to that required of other landlords
3. Increased support from all levels of government (All levels of government need to increase their oversight and funding for NYCHA projects)
4. Targets for improved regulatory compliance (75 percent "unsatisfactory" rate for elevator inspections is an embarrassment)

For all the problems, the year 2009 -- the 75th anniversary of the creation of the New York City Housing Authority -- promises to be a moment of transition for public housing, and an opportunity. Key leadership positions in the Obama administration will be held by people who understand the importance of public housing and who are familiar with the many challenges facing public housing residents in New York City -- Shaun Donovan, Commissioner of NYC's Department of Housing Preservation and Development, will be Secretary of the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development. Bronx Borough President Adolfo Carrion, a trained urban planner, is reportedly going to be asked to head a new White House office of urban policy. At the same time, Mayor Bloomberg will soon be appointing a new head of the Department of Housing Preservation and Development, and a new New York City Housing Authority commissioner to replace former commissioner Tino Hernandez, who recently resigned.

There is hope not only that the problems of public housing can be fixed, but that NYCHA buildings will be appreciated for the great asset that they are to the city as a whole.

Health Care Briefing and Discussion
Thurs, Feb. 5th. 7:30 PM
Youth Hostel, 103rd St. & Amsterdam
Board Room, 2nd Fl.

Everyone interested in working on a Health Care agenda is invited.

Three Parks will hold a Health Care Forum
on either
February 11th or March 11th.
Details to be announced.

Indian Point: Close It

By Ali Haridopolos

For 42 years Indian Point has been located within twenty miles of the New York City. Under current law it is illegal, because it is too close to the city. Currently, its lease is up, and therefore, this would be a prime time to close it.

Indian Point is dangerous to New York in a myriad of ways. First, it produces an abundant amount of waste. Specifically, it has produced 1,500 tons of deadly waste. Second, it uses over 2.4 billion gallons of water everyday, without a permit (http://assembly.state.ny.us/member_files/092/20031114/). For over a decade, the Department of Environmental Conservation has refused to allow this permit (*ibid*). Indian Point has killed billions of river organisms (*ibid*). In 2001 the FBI filed a report against Indian Point and required that they have more testing of its security forces with the assistance of the FBI (<http://www.nci.org/01NCI/12/kallstrom.htm>). This testing will now continue throughout 2009 due to the requests of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (<http://www.lohud.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2008812290331>).

Forty percent of greenhouse gas emission in the USA comes from generating electricity. There is no excuse for this because alternative energy is an option and studies have shown that alternative energy will provide more than enough energy for the area. One good source of alternate energy is wind power. If people are interested getting wind power for their homes, they can do so at a website called, new wind energy (<http://www.newwindenergy.com/nyc>). This does cost about ten dollars more than the average ConEdison bill, but

the benefits outweigh the costs. Thus, it is not enough to simply oppose Indian Point and not act against it.

FREE LEGAL CLINIC FOR TENANTS

Sponsored by Assemblymember

Daniel O'Donnell.

Thursday, Jan. 29 & Thursday, Feb. 26, 2009

Please call Joyce Goodman at 212-866-3970

to make an appointment

Resolution to Address the Mayor's End Run Around Term Limits

The following resolution will be voted on at the January 14th meeting. There will be a brief discussion beforehand.

WHEREAS, New Yorkers voted in a 1993 referendum to impose term limits on the Mayor, the Comptroller, the Public Advocate and City Council Members;

WHEREAS, New Yorkers voted in a 1996 referendum to affirm the two-term limit imposed on these elected officials;

WHEREAS, in October 2008 the Mayor proposed legislation before the New York City Council to extend the two-term limit to three terms;

WHEREAS, the Mayor and the Council fast tracked this legislation at the height of the Presidential election, thereby denying New Yorkers who opposed the measure the opportunity to organize against it;

WHEREAS, the Mayor and City Council Members ran for office knowing they could serve only eight years;

WHEREAS, this legislation allowed the Mayor and the Council simply to nullify the results of the two 1990s referendums in favor of benefiting certain office holders; and

WHEREAS, whether individuals support or oppose term limits or referendums as a method to determine policy, the Mayor's approach was a naked power grab;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Three Parks Independent Democrats unequivocally opposes the extension of term limits via passage of the Mayor's October legislation.

We call upon our elected officials to demand that the City hold a referendum to reinstitute the two-term limit for current office holders. New York City voters should decide the issue before Mayor Bloomberg is given a chance to run again in 2009.

The Need for Food Donations

Many thanks to all the Holiday Party goers for all their food donations at the Three Parks Holiday Party. We delivered over 250 lbs. of non-perishable foods to The Westside Campaign Against Hunger. Let's all resolve to continue our support of all our local pantries and soup kitchens throughout 2009 as the need keeps growing every day. And let's make sure the new Obama administration vows to put an end to hunger in America. If we can bail out Wall Street, surely we can fund food stamps and food banks.

The Courts in 2009

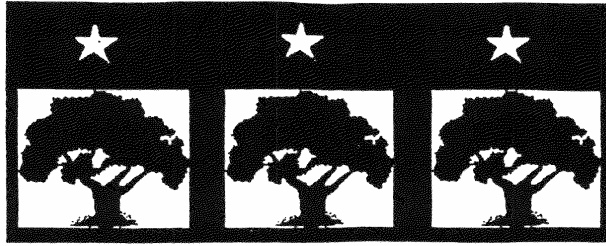
By Cynthia Doty

With the retirement of Chief Justice Judith Kaye from the NY State Court of Appeals on December 31st, Governor Paterson will soon be appointing her replacement. Unfortunately, the pool he must pick from includes no women. After years of progress, this will mean a major step backward for diversity on the bench and for more equality for women in the workplace. Hopefully, women will fare better in future appointments and the glass ceilings will be broken and equal pay for equal work will become a reality in all forms of employment.

2009 will also see the resolution of the Manhattan Surrogate Court position. Nora Anderson has been suspended until the criminal case against her for illegal campaign finance filings is concluded. The Office of Court Administration will appoint a temporary replacement.

Supreme Court Justice John Stackhouse will be reaching the mandatory age for retirement in 2009 so there will be one opening for County-wide Supreme Court Justice. There will be 2 open Civil Court races in the 3rd and 9th districts. Cynthia Kern, Analisa Torres, and Walter Tolub will be up for re-election in their Civil Court districts, 3rd, 6th, and 9th respectively. There are no races in our districts.

The deadline for the next newsletter is
January 28, 2009.



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Cathedral Station P.O. Box 1316 • New York, NY 10025 (212) 866-6378

Please pay your 2009 dues by filling out the form below and bringing it to the next meeting
or by mailing it with your check to:

Three Parks Independent Democrats
Cathedral Station P.O. Box 1316
New York, N.Y. 10025
Attn: Treasurer

2009 MEMBERSHIP FORM

New Member___

Renewal___

Membership Category -- Check One

Individual (\$25) _____

Family -- two adults in the same household (\$40) _____

Student/Senior Citizen/Low Income (\$10)_____

Low Income Family (18) _____

Sponsor (\$50)_____ Patron (\$100) _____

Name_____ Date_____

Address_____ Apt. #_____

City_____ State_____ Zip_____

Phone (H)_____ (W)_____

Email_____

Check here if you prefer to receive the newsletter via email.

Please make out all checks to "Three Parks Independent Democrats - Dues 2009"

Three Parks Independent Democrats
Cathedral Station P.O. Box 1316
New York, NY 10025

NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, January 14, 2009

**THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION & ORGANIZED LABOR:
Public Works & Green Jobs**

ALBANY UPDATE 2009